

Lahore fort is one of the most striking examples of Mughal architecture — the only place in Pakistan representing the various phases of the Mughal architecture's development. It shows the marvelous work done by the four different emperors.

The fort endates the coming of Mahmud of Ghazni in the 11th century, was ruined by the Mangols in 1241, rebuilt in 1267, destroyed again in 1398 and rebuilt once more in 1421 by Mughal Emperor Akbar the great. Akbar replaced its mud wall with solid brick masonry in 1566 and extended it to northwards. Later Jehangir, Shahjahan and Aurangzeb, all added the stamps of their widely differing personalities to its

Lahore Fort is a source of pride for us — for its grandeur as well as the architectural expertise of our ancient rulers. There is a whole long history attached with its developments through the ages. Mona Zia checks out some facts and figures for the readers' interest

fortification.

The fort encloses an area of approximately 30 acres and it is possible to spend many hours wandering there, lost in contemplation of times lonely, trying to reconstruct in your imagination a way of life that the world will never see again. The buildings within its walls are testament to the gracious style of mughal rule at its height, in which every man knew his place and country behavior had been reined in to an elaborately stratification social code. Much of the architecture reflects this code. From a raised balcony in Diwan-e-Aam, the emperors looked down on the common people over whom they came to present petitions and to request the settlement of disputes. Wealthier citizens and the nobility were allowed to meet their emperors on a level floor in Dewan-e-Khass, the hall of special audience, which was also built by Shah Jahan in 1631.

Through the ages

after the death of Aurangzeb. He heard about the atrocities of Sikhs, he moved towards Lahore. Governor put the city in a fortified condition and the strong fortifications of the fort and the strong walls saved the city proper from the ravages of the Sikh bands. Bahadur Shah did not take his residence in the fort of Lahore. His camp was pitched near the bank of River Ravi. For the rest of his life he resided at Lahore and died in 1124 AH.

After the death of Bahadur Shah the usual struggle for the crown was started among the four brothers. Jahandar Shah ascended the throne and killed all the contestants of the throne. But Jahandar Shah was a weak and indolent king. He appointed Zabardast Khan as the Governor of Lahore and himself went to Delhi, leading a life of debauchery. Farrukh Syiar son of Azeem-us-Shah in a battle killed him with the help of Sayyad Brothers. He ascended the throne of Delhi in 1713 AD.

The civil war in Punjab encouraged the Sikhs and they became unruly in Punjab. But Abdul Samad Khan who was made the governor of Lahore was deputed to

Dad Khan refused to submit unless the royal orders were shown to him. Then Sir Baland Khan dispatched Mir Mohammed Khan with a force, which took over the charge.

Meanwhile the Sikhs grew stronger and they besieged the city of Lahore in 1174 AH. To keep the peace in the city, Sikhs were given a sum of rupees 30,000 by Mir Muhammad Khan, the deputy of Sar Baland Khan. Sar Baland Khan did not like this act of Mir Muhammad Khan and transferred him to province of Multan and appointed Khawaja Ubed as Governor of Lahore. But during his reign the Sikhs gained immense power, the Sikh chiefs Lehna Singh, Gujar Singh and others made a plan to capture the fort of Lahore and came with a force of 2,000 jats and succeeded and became the masters of the fort. And after the death of Ahmad Shah Abdali in 1184 AH, the Sikhs even expressed a great joy. Lehna Singh occupied the fort and kept it till his death. He ruled for 30 years. His rule is recorded to be a peaceful one. After his death Ranjit Singh was invited to occupy Lahore and the fort, for which Ranjit Singh already had a great desire.

fort after taking over the city of Lahore. The Lahore Fort was used by him as his palace and residence Darbar, as also an area for his occasional sittings in Hazoori Bagh or camping outside the fort on military exercise. Some accounts shows that Ranjit Singh cleared the debris of old fort and made some crude and vulgar changes in the architecture in various parts of the buildings of the fort. This can be seen when he changed the name of Moti Masjid to Moti Mundir.

Ranjit Singh died on 27 June 1839, due to illness. Dr Hoingberger describes the death and cremation ceremonies in the Lahore fort saying:

"He died at the Fortress in my presence, upon which the minister ordered the gates to be shut. The small doses of opium which Ranjit Singh took daily and the strong spirits he used to drink at different hours of the day, transported him in to a kind of excitement, which manifested itself in the highest degree in the evening after the enjoyment of larger portions of spirits. Every one feared and loved him at the same time."

placed the hands of his son in that of Dhair Singh, the dying monarch with order for Dhair Singh to place Kharak Singh on the throne and to act as a protector and the guardian. He further advised Dhair that he expected from Dhair Singh for his past favors that would act to Kharak Singh as a loyal and favorite minister.

From the day, Kharak Singh took over, the war of intrigue in succession between the Sikhs and Sardars started and the fort became the center of feuds and fights.

The death of Ranjit Singh was infact, followed by a rapid succession of crime and tragedies. There started a civil war among the people. By the end of first decade after the death of Ranjit Singh, the Sikhs came across with the British Army and they fought four battles against them. The treachery of the Sikh commander and the lack of proper guidance made the Sikh power kneel down before the British.

The British Army advanced towards the city of Lahore where it reached on the morning of Feb 20, 1846.

Annexation was announced in a Darbar held in the Lahore Fort. The darbar was held in the fort in the Summer Burj on the March 29 at which the formal annexation of the Punjab was declared.

All Sikhs who had not taken any part in the revolt were given pension and settled in their hereditary villages. All the state property treasures was confiscated to the East India Company and the fort constituted only one part of those many things. It was in the fort when the fate of the Punjab was sealed. The court of Sheesh Mahal witnessed a scene of disgrace, which makes the head of the Punjab hang down in shame. The Governor General proclaimed the annexation of the Punjab. People were so disappointed of the short ascendancy of the Sikhs.

The fort remained under the occupation of British till the independence of the subcontinent. With the establishment of Archaeological Department by the Government of India, many of the buildings of the fort were handed over to it. These were the first moves in the scheme by which it was hoped to treat the Fort on the same footings, as the Forts of Agra and Delhi in terms of conservation. But



hall of special audience, which was also built by Shah Jahan in 1633.

After the death of Shah Jahan, no major changes were made in the fort except that on the West Side. Alamgiri gate was opened towards Hazoori Bagh and Badshahi Mosque, which was constructed during the reign of Aurangzeb. The Ravi was so close to the fort that Aurangzeb built a three miles embankment to protect it, and thereby altered the Ravi course. The buildings of the time of Akbar and Jehangir were mainly of red sandstone with a preference given to the use of Hindu beams and brackets and decorative figures of animals like lion, elephant and peacock. The buildings of their successors, Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb- Moti Masjid, the Naulakha pavilion and the Shah Buri Sheesh Mahal are in a striking contrast with the former, with the use of white marble in place of sandstone and exuberance of Persian motifs in the form of pietra dura work and mosaic of coloured stones.

Bahadur Shah was the emperor



Attitude of governments and public have turned the fort into a dilapidated building now.

crush the Sikh power. He was a strong man and set whole province in to peace and order.

As far as the physical development of the fort was concerned, Aurangzeb's successors did not contribute anything to the fort. The Punjab governors who had assumed a kind of independence, felt contented with what they had got.

In 1761 AD, the famous battle of Panipat took place in which Marhattas who were invading in the fort, were perfectly collapsed. Ahmad Shah then appointed Sar Baland Khan as the governor of the Punjab who in his return appointed Surat Singh his deputy and sent him to Lahore. Karim

It was in 1812 when Lahore and the fort saw the scenes of great rejoice and festivals under the reign of Ranjit Singh. Fortification of the fort was in progress and it was planned to connect the fort with the Grand Mosque of Aurangzeb on northwards. He succeeded in obtaining the famous diamond Koh-e-Noor from Shah Shujah and its acquisition celebrated in the city of Lahore. In 1818, Peshawar 1819, Kashmir and in 1820, Dara Ghazi Khan were captured by Ranjit Singh as a result of ravages of Sikhs which started in among 1119 AH to 1124 AH.

Finally Ranjit Singh occupied the

The first sad and cruel incident after the death of Ranjit Singh was the ill practice of Hindu culture i.e. **satti**, his all 11 wives were burnt along with him.

On the death of Ranjit Singh there arouse feuds for the ascendancy to the rule of Punjab in which various Sikh Sardars played their part in their own interest and there were wretched assassinations and intrigues at the fort and the battles for its occupations. On the deathbed of Maharaja, he called his Prime Minister and his son Khardar Singh. He trusted his minister the most during his rein because the minister was really faithful to his work, he

to treat the Fort on the same footings, as the Forts of Agra and Dehli in terms of conservation. But when they left subcontinent, they took with them precious stones including Koh-e-noor. Now only the remains of the buildings are there and this fort is now open for general public where thousands of people visit daily, they include all types of people. Some are interested in its architecture, some for its historical background and some just visit to rejoice. It is, however, unfortunate that this precious heritage is not being maintained and instead being misused.

The fort is regularly used for official dinners of the visitors and guests by the Government. Above all, the rulers try to please the visitors by arranging fireworks and musical evenings and the high noise level does every possible harm to reduce the age of this historic monument. No repairs are being done and there is no maintenance work.